

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EA-11 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 INT-08 SCEM-02

ACDA-19 AID-20 EB-11 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 STR-08 OMB-01

CEA-02 COME-00 FRB-02 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01

DRC-01 SAJ-01 /251 W

----- 103387

R 271725Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9489

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

OECD PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 928

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USINT ALGIERS

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 7494

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BE, EEC, XF, ENGR

SUBJECT: BELGIAN COMMENTS ON END OF ARAB OIL BOYCOTT FOR BELGIUM

1. SUMMARY. FONMINISTRY SOURCE ATTRIBUTES ANNOUNCED CHANGE IN BELGIUM'S STATUS FOR OIL DELIVERIES TO ARAB DECISION THAT TIME HAS COME TO MAKE ALLEVIATIONS FOR EUROPE WHEREVER CONVENIENT JUSTIFICATIONS ARE AT HAND. HE INSISTED BELGIANS HAVE NOT SAID OR DONE ANYTHING MORE SYMPATHETIC TO ARAB CAUSE THAN GLOSS ON EC-9 POSITION VOICED BY FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE NOVEMBER 27. OFFICIALS SEE ENERGY PROBLEMS AS CONTINUING FOR BELGIUM DESPITE PRIVILEGED NEW STATUS, BUT SENSE OF URGENCY FOR SPECIAL MEASURES (INCLUDING CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO US ACTION GROUP PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO SLACKEN.)
END SUMMARY.

2. FONOFF ACTING DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST (YVES VERCAUTEREN) MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS TO POLCOUNSELOR DECEMBER 26: GOB HAD NOT YET RECEIVED OFFICIAL NOTICE OF KUWAIT ANNOUNCEMENT BY WHICH BELGIUM AND JAPAN WILL HENCEFORTH BE TREATED AS "FRIENDLY COUNTRIES" LIKE BRITIAN AND FRANCE WITH RESPECT TO OIL NEEDS. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS UNEXPECTED IN ITS TIMING AND DETAIL (RE ROTTERDAM) EVEN THOUGH NOT ENTIRELY SURPRISING.

3. ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN PRECEDED BY BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE HINTS. POSITIVE HINTS WERE EXEMPLIFIED BY SOOTHING COMMENTS MADE TO VERCAUTEREN IN EARLY DECEMBER IN RABAT WHERE FONOFF OFFICIALS HAD SAID "YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT AS SOON AS THE GENEVA TALKS ARE STARTED". NEGATIVE INFERENCE HAD BEEN DRAWN FROM MORE RECENT WORD FROM JIDDA (BRUSSELS 7445) SAYING SAUDIS WOULD NOT AGREE TO USE OF ROTTERDAM FOR BELGIAN CRUDE. THIS WAS A POSITION NOW APPARENTLY REVERSED BY KUWAIT DECISION.

4. GOB HAS NOT ADDED TO OR TAKEN ACTION GOING BEYOND STATEMENT MADE TO BELGIAN CHAMBER BY FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE NOVEMBER 27
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(BRUSSELS 6893.) BRIEFING SENT BY FON MINISTRY DECEMBER 26 TO BELGIAN EMBASSIES IN WASHINGTON AND EC-9 CAPITALS STRESSES THIS POINT.

5. ARAB AMBASSADORS IN BRUSSELS HAVE BEEN ARGUING FOR SOME WEEKS TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS THAT VAN ELSLANDE'S NOVEMBER 27 STATEMENT WAS A GESTURE GOOD ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY ACCEPTANCE OF BELGIAN ARGUMENT THAT BELGIUM WAS A "FRIENDLY COUNTRY" (BRUSSELS 7013),

ACCORDING TO VERCAUTEREN, AND THAT EUROPE WAS BEING MADE TO SUFFER NEEDLESSLY.

6. ALSO ON DECEMBER 26, FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT STATING:

"ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF MESSERS YAMANI AND ABDESSELAM REPRESENTING THE PETROLEUM PRODUCING COUNTRIES, THE BELGIAN POSITION ON THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT WAS PRESENTED ALONG LINES STRICTLY

IDENTICAL TO MY STATEMENT TO THE CHAMBER ON NOVEMBER 27. THE DECISION AT KUWAIT NO DOUBT WAS TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF THE REPORT MADE BY THESE TWO MINISTERS. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FAVORABLE DECISION WILL NOT BE FELT IMMEDIATELY IN BELGIUM AND I WILL BE CONSULTING WITH MY COLLEAGUE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS ON THIS SUBJECT. THE NEED TO EXAMINE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL THE WHOLE ENERGY PROBLEM REMAINS IN THE VIEW OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT STILL JUST AS URGENT, AND THE GOVERNMENT STILL ATTACHES THE SAME IMPORTANCE TO IMPLEMENTING THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF COPENHAGEN. AN

ORDERLY FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMON ENERGY MARKET IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN UNIFICATION".

7. DURING CONVERSATION DECEMBER 26 WITH BAEYENS, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ECONOMICS MINISTRY, ECOMCOUNSELOR EXPRESSED PARTICULAR SURPRISE AT REPORTED ARAB ACQUIESCENCE TO TRANSIT OF PETROLEUM TO BELGIUM VIA ROTTERDAM, WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO ECONOMIC MINISTER'S EXPECTATIONS LAST WEEK (BRUSSELS 7445). BAEYENS SAID HE HAD NO INFORMATION BEYOND PRESS REPORTS FROM KUWAIT. HE WONDERED HOW MUCH OIL BELGIUM MIGHT ACTUALLY GET UNDER NEW ARAB DECISION. HE SAID BELGIUM OF COURSE SHOULD NOT BE COMPLACENT BUT ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW STATUS FOR BELGIUM WOULD CERTAINLY AFFECT PREPARATIONS HE IS CURRENTLY MAKING FOR FUTURE PETROLEUM RESTRICTIONS.

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8. COMMENT: EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT LIKELY THAT ARABS ELECTED TO REWARD BELGIUM FOR THAT PORTION OF VAN ELSLANDE'S STATEMENT OF NOVEMBER 27 PUBLICLY OPTING FOR FRENCH VERSION OF "AMBIGUOUS" PARAGRAPH IN UN RESOLUTION 242 RE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES FROM THE

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, IN ACCORDANCE, SAID VAN ELSLANDE WITH BASIC PRIN-

CIPLE OF THE INADMISSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING TERRITORIES BY FORCE. ARABS ALSO ARE LIKELY TO HAVE FOUND REASONABLE THE ARGUMENT BY THE BELGIANS (AND OTHERS) THAT PRESSURES HARMFUL TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY WERE NEITHER EFFECTIVE WITH RESPECT TO ISRAEL NOR IN THE LONG-TERM ARAB INTEREST. BAEYENS COMMENTS TOGETHER WITH PRESS REACTIONS (REPORTED SEPARATELY) IN WHICH SATISFACTION FAR OUTWEIGHS CONCERN OVER COMPLACENCY, INDICATE THAT THE ARAB MOVE MAY REDUCE

PRESSURES FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE BELGIAN FOLLOW-THROUGH TO EARLIER
EXPRESSION OF GOOD-WILL TOWARDS CONCEPT OF US-EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN AN ENERGY ACTION GROUP. (BRUSSELS 7445). BOOCHEVER

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